

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Floods can Threaten Pets' Health, Too**

INDIANAPOLIS (19 June 2008)—People aren't the only flood victims whose health can be impacted by flooding. Cats, dogs and other pets can suffer the ill effects of rising waters, according the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH).

Flood waters can carry a lot of invisible health hazards that can sicken or kill dogs and cats, according to Sandra KL Norman, DVM, Director of Companion Animals for BOAH. Pets are easily exposed to chemicals, pollutants and disease-causing organisms that are not obvious to the naked eye.

As they return home and begin the cleanup, pet owners should take time to assess their animals' environment for hazards as well. That means looking at the environment from the pet's perspective.

Flood waters can contain bacteria such as E. coli and salmonella that cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Animals can also suffer the effects of chemical burns, like dermatitis, conjunctivitis or hair loss, from toxic substances contaminating the water. The can easily pick up parasites, both internal and external, including roundworms, hookworms, giardia and fleas.

The number of biting parasites including mosquitoes, fleas and ticks, increases post-flood. Animal vaccinations should be kept up-to-date to lower the chances of disease caused by the increase in parasites, this may require that pets may need to be boosted for distemper, parvovirus and hepatitis.

Pet owners are advised to be watchful for clinical signs including:

- vomiting
- diarrhea
- dermatitis
- fever
- respiratory stress
- physical illness

Animal owners should contact a veterinary practitioner to seek treatment immediately.

Indiana is home to approximately 31 million animals, including livestock, pets and wild animals. Two of every three Indiana households own at least one pet. Indiana became the first state, in 1994, to integrate planning for animals in the statewide emergency plan. For more information about disaster preparedness visit [www.boah.in.gov](http://www.boah.in.gov) .